

ALCOVA HEIGHTS

The Newsletter of the Alcova Heights Neighborhood, Arlington, Virginia

alcovaheights.com

April 2017

NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

Neighborhood meetings are planned for the **third Thursday** of May, September, and November.

Volunteers are needed for our annual events including the park cleanup, the block party and the Halloween parade. Sara Uzel will be the volunteer coordinator if you're interested in helping out.

The listserve will be moving to Google Groups for greater security this spring, but the Yahoo Group archive will continue to exist. Koset Surakomol will be handling the switchover.

Pet of the Month: Ceili

Ceili (pronounced kay-lee) hails from the plum orchards of West Virginia, and has taken up residence with the McMahon family since 2012. Her name is Irish for "dance" or "festival," and she can certainly be found dancing her way down 7th Street on her regular walks. As for festivals, Ceili is always welcoming to other neighbor pets who would like to romp in her backyard. That said, she is somewhat less welcoming to local rabbits and squirrels.



President's Update

by Lander Allin, AHCA President

The last couple of months have been busy ones in Alcova Heights. We learned in late January that Congressman Beyer's office and Arlington County were working together with the State Department to address our concerns regarding this year's upcoming construction at the National Foreign Affairs Training Center.

Thanks to Noah Simon from Beyer's office and Brian Stout from the County Manager's office we know that:

1. NFATC is expanding their fencing perimeter over land that was formerly unfenced, but that they own, due to security setbacks and new construction of an expanded child care facility. The existing path from Quincy over to George Mason Drive will close by August and there's nothing we can do to change that decision;
2. The County Manager's office would like to work with us to upgrade the mostly mud "path" through Alcova Heights Park from Quincy to 8th street. This would provide us with something of an alternative to the path that is closing. We also learned that the County Capital Improvement Plan for Fiscal Year 2018 includes \$4 million for improvements to the park that could be used to help fund the improvements. We'll be working with County staff on the planning for all of the improvements to the park;
3. The State Department is interested in conveying land to the County (as part of a land swap) that would allow a path to be built between South 3rd Street and Quincy;
4. There's no news on the other two significant impacts from the expansion on the NFATC - traffic and parking. The County is still working on those issues and we expect more to come on that.

We had two well-attended (and energetic) meetings in February to discuss the issues about the NFATC expansion. Most of the focus was on the possible construction of the trail from Quincy to 3rd Street. The first meeting was a briefing by Simon and Stout with them taking questions from the community. At the second meeting on February 16 (after a pre-planned briefing from [CPRO](#) about the future of Columbia Pike), we voted 46-17 in favor of a resolution to further explore options for a trail. The approval of the resolution was a vote ONLY to explore further the possibility of a trail and to gather enough information to make an informed decision. Since then we've formed a committee of 7 residents to work with Beyer's office, the County Manager's office, and State to gather information and develop options that will then be brought back to the Association for consideration and a vote on whether to proceed with anything.

cont'd. on page 3



A Neighbor Profile: *Maura McMahon, APS School Board Candidate*

For this newsletter, we reached out to a neighbor who is making some news in Arlington. Maura McMahon is challenging the incumbent James Lander for a position on the [Arlington School Board](#). The election is on May 9, May 11, and 13. While people without children may shrug their shoulders, we note that 2016's school budget was \$582M or over ½ billion dollars. Arlington is experiencing an influx of school-age children which has led to school overcrowding and the need to add space throughout the entire system, including the possible creation of a new high school.

Who is Maura McMahon - give us some background.

I'm a Midwest girl from Troy, Ohio, with a BA from Miami University in Oxford, OH and an MPA from George Mason University. I moved to Alexandria, VA in 1992 and have worked for the Social Security Disability program, the National Coalition for the Homeless, and the American Diabetes Association.

I married Michael McMahon and moved to Alcov Heights in 2001. We have two children, Ian (6th grade at Jefferson MS) and Sarah (4th grade at Barcroft ES), one dog Ceili, and recently various fish (of dubious fates). Reliably unsuccessful gardeners, my husband and I start each spring with the best of intentions. We built the first floor addition to our 7th Street home ourselves, and later had a pre-fab addition craned onto the top of it. I am grateful that we found a home in Alcov Heights and I enjoy socializing with neighbors and meeting the neighborhood dogs while out and about with our six year old collie mix, Ceili. I have found it is much harder to meet the neighborhood fish. I like board games - fun ones, not thinking ones - and playing cards, antiques, talking about schools and kids, and dream of one day having a fully put-together, finished house and beautiful garden.

In the neighborhood, I led the effort for the Carlisle-style streetlights on 7th Street and served as Alcov's representative to the [Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee](#). I've served as Barcroft PTA's VP for Academics and have volunteered for various school activities, most notably coordinating the Odyssey of the Mind program. I recently also served on the [TJ Working Group](#) and the [South Arlington Working Group](#) to determine the location of the new elementary school about to be built next to Jefferson MS.

I'm currently on the executive board for [County Council](#) of PTAs, a forum for the exchange of ideas and information among state and local PTAs and APS administration.

Why are you running for school board?

Arlington Public School (APS)'s "Band-Aid" approach to problem-solving without a long-term vision for our rapidly growing schools has resulted in missed opportunities and inequities in our educational system. As a parent of two young children still early in their educational journeys, I will bring a fresh perspective that has been long-absent from the School Board.

Recent community conversations and events within Arlington schools have demonstrated that Arlington is not immune to the trends and issues facing communities elsewhere. Our community needs - and our students deserve - responsive leadership from a Board that is willing to engage in difficult conversations and has the leadership to make decisions that uphold our stated values. We can no longer merely pay lip service to APS' core values and mission of diversity, inclusivity, and preparing our students to be responsible and productive global citizens. We must elevate socioeconomic diversity in admissions and boundary decisions and strengthen the ties between students all across Arlington.

What issues are of the most concern to you?

1. Developing a long-term master plan for schools in order to get ahead of capacity demands and provide an optimal academic experience for each student when they first walk through the door of an Arlington public school, not when they're walking out - and having that plan incorporated into the County's comprehensive plan.
2. Addressing disparities in instructional opportunities and student achievement, and increasing opportunities for diverse academic and social experiences for all students.
3. Implementing clearly defined goals and corresponding performance metrics for all initiatives and programs to ensure our investments of time, money, and human resources are effective and maximized.
4. Creating an integrated, collaborative network of school, community, County, and business resources.

Lander's column cont'd. from page 1

The committee will also be working on several other issues besides any possible path - saving the sledding hill, minimizing the impact of the new fence that State will build, addressing the light pollution and obtaining more screening/landscaping between the NFATC and the adjoining properties.

As I've noted before, we have 2 other major development projects that will get under way this summer. There will be a pre-construction meeting with the Food Star developer on April 6 at the Barcroft House. Alcova Heights residents are welcome. We will host a pre-construction meeting of our own on May 18 about the county-approved Gilliam Place low income housing project on the former Arlington Presbyterian Church site that will be in conjunction with our regular Association meeting that night. As you can see, there's a lot going on. I'll make sure we keep you posted on all of these issues.

Both images from www.arlingtonva.us



Rendering of the proposed new Columbia Pike Village Center at Columbia Pike and George Mason Dr.



Rendering of the redevelopment of the Arlington Presbyterian Church site into Gilliam Place, an affordable housing apartment complex at Columbia Pike and S. Lincoln St.

A Neighbor Profile:

Janet Draper, Smithsonian Gardener

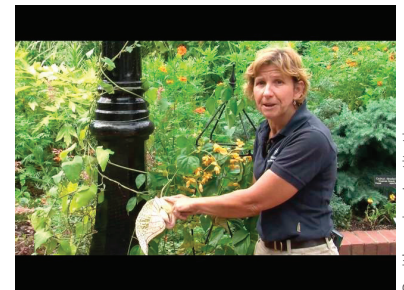


Janet with her husband, Adam Becker.

I am originally from Delphi, a little farming town in Northwestern Indiana. (Our claim to fame was we had the only stop light in the county! I think there are a couple now, but it is still a quiet town.)

I always knew I wanted to work with plants, and Purdue was only 18 miles away, so it was an easy choice for a great education in horticulture. Once I had the pedigree in hand, I still didn't know what I wanted to do, so I was advised to get hands-on experience by taking internships, which landed me in Delaware, Maryland, Germany and England. Then I took jobs outside of Chicago, Long Island, and was living in Annapolis, when I learned about Smithsonian Institution hiring horticulturists.

I was given The Mary **Livingston Ripley Garden** located adjacent to the Arts and Industries Building on the National Mall. Twenty years later, I am still there, playing in the dirt and talking to visitors from around the world.



Smithsonian Institution

Watch Janet: www.gardens.si.edu/our-gardens/ripley-garden.html

My husband, Adam

Becker, and I moved to Alcova Heights on the corner of 6th and Oakland --the house with the tall fence and crazy prairie front garden -- around 2004 and have been working on making the house our home ever since. In 2014 we felt the garden was ready, so our fabulous neighbor Walter Green united us in marriage in our back garden with a small group of friends and neighbors.

Adam and I enjoy puttering in our gardens with our two cats, Maggie and Ginger, and really enjoy the camaraderie of Alcova Heights, and feel very connected thanks to the work done by all the neighborhood's volunteers.

Perhaps this is the year we will instigate spontaneous BYO Open Garden/Happy Hour when the gardens are looking good!

A Neighbor Profile:

Zuraidah Hoffman, Communications Manager for NRECA International

Putting this newsletter together in March, we decided to feature some of our neighbors for women's history month, even though the issue officially comes out in April. Zuraidah Hoffman lives on Lincoln Street, runs marathons, and works for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) here in Arlington, which has actually brought electricity to far more people overseas than it did in Appalachia. She's married to Scot Hoffman (who compiled this newsletter for years).

How long have you lived in AH?

Scot and I bought our house on Lincoln Street in July 1999. We bribed friends with food to help us, and it was the fastest move ever.

Where are you from originally?

I'm originally from Malaysia – I've lived in the US since 1987, and just last year became a US citizen. And I voted for the very first time ever!

Where did you go to school?

I did my primary and secondary education in Malaysia, and came to the DC area to attend The George Washington University to study journalism.

Tell us about your family.

I have two daughters Saleha (16+) a junior at Wakefield HS, and Lily (12+) a 7th grader at Thomas Jefferson MS. Saleha once told me she cannot imagine living anywhere else.

What do you do for a living?

I work for NRECA -- a trade association that represents America's electric cooperatives. But I get my paycheck by telling the story of [NRECA International](http://www.nrecainternational.org), the international arm of the trade association, that helps bring electricity to communities in developing countries. I've been the communications manager for NRECA International since 2013. Since its creation 50 years ago, this non-profit has brought electricity access to 120 million people in 43 countries.

How did that lead to your recent trip to Africa?

All of our work is in under-developed countries/communities. So I get to travel to many of the areas where we have projects, and collect stories of the people who will benefit from the reliable electricity we bring them and compel our audience to understand the importance of the work, and en-



Zuraidah interviews health care workers at a private clinic in Gbarnga, Liberia, which will receive reliable electricity in about 18 months.

courage more support via financial donations or volunteers from our membership base.

NRECA International is helping bring electricity to 6 countries in Africa right now, and we are implementing several electrification projects in Liberia, so off I went. As I usually do, I traveled with a videographer/photographer, and had the opportunity to be in many communities – in the capital Monrovia, and also the very rural areas outside of the city. I interviewed community leaders, villagers, business owners, and families. (See the video Zuraidah produced here: www.nrecainternational.coop/where-we-work/liberia/)

What can you tell us about visiting Africa?

I've only been to Liberia and I was in Tanzania about 5 years ago, with [Asante Mariamu](#), another non-profit started by fellow neighbors Susan and Doug DuBois. And both countries are different. Liberia, however, is one of the poorest countries in the world. So I saw a lot of things and heard a lot of stories from the people I met that I don't think I'll ever forget. From my travels to other under-developed countries like Haiti and Bolivia, I've learned that there are different kinds of poverty. And it's not necessarily something you can see with your eyes.

On a lighter note, why aren't you writing restaurant reviews for the newsletter?

Ha! Because I don't have time to try out new restaurants anymore!

A Neighbor Profile:

Eric Simmons, Lead Pastor of Redeemer Church

What a privilege to be your neighbors in Alcovia Heights! Since the beginning of [Redeemer Arlington](#) in 2010, our church (and we believe a church is simply a family of people who believe that what Jesus says and did matters, and have chosen to follow him) wanted to be in a neighborhood, to be a presence in the community that might serve the practical, spiritual, and cultural needs of people.

Our church has moved six times in six years, and some weeks attendees had to check the website to see where we were meeting before coming. Let's just say it has been a challenge. Two years ago, we moved from the Arlington Temple in Rosslyn to Arlington United Methodist Church's building. We had found out that unfortunately AUMC was closing its doors as a church, so we asked the board of trustees if we might continue their 100-year legacy as a church in Alcovia Heights.

One of the things I love the most about meeting in AUMC is that many people are able to walk to church. We want to be a place of worship for the people of this neighborhood and for the surrounding area. We love this area for its diversity, culture, and hospitality. Our long-term vision as a church is to start multiple "walkable communities" of churches in the Arlington and DC areas that are really there for the neighborhood, working in partnership with the Acts

29 Network. We have started one new church in the NOMA area of DC and hope to continue in the future.

We are a diverse group of different nationalities, socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender, and age. Many come on a Sunday who do not believe in the claims or work of Jesus Christ, and we love that and want to be a safe place for those who are skeptical. On any given Sunday there are about 300 people in attendance, not counting the 90 kids. When our church started, there were 32 adults and 8 kids, four of which were mine. If you do come, what you can expect is a time of singing, praying, and studying the Bible together, followed by communion. I know I can say on behalf of the people of Redeemer, we would love to have you join us on a Sunday.

Finally, we really want to be good neighbors. So, if there are any needs in the neighborhood, no matter how small or big, please let me know for we would love to do all we can to help. Lastly, if you ever have any parking issues (thanks for letting us park in your neighborhood) please don't hesitate to contact me. My email is eric@redeemerarlington.com.

Announcements & Milestones

Michael McMahon's half-century birthday passed in February. **Maura McMahon** is running for school board. **Robert Lee Peake** of Quincy Street passed away at home on February 2, 2017. On 7th St, **Melissa Daddio's** mom, **Mary Hawes**, was in to visit from the Chicago area to celebrate her 70th birthday. **Carol Petersen** of 7th St has had her photography included in an art and jewelry show in Manassas. **Kristina Dorville** left DHS after 13 years and is now a Senior Vice President for Information Security and Cyber Public Policy at Wells Fargo. **Lois Koontz** will be receiving a Certificate of Appreciation from Arlington County Civic Federation. **Koset Surakomol's** mother passed away in March.



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Scott and Sarah wanted a larger home and didn't want to deal with building an addition. We met to discuss options. They didn't want to sell their existing home until they could find and move into their new home. After evaluating their situation, I suggested that they consider a bridge loan since Scott and Sarah had some equity in their property.

Bridge loans are temporary in nature with maturities ranging from 30-120 days secured by the equity in your existing home to free up your cash to purchase a new home. I recommended a few local lenders who offer Bridge loan financing. They chose one, got approved and we started looking at move up options. They took their time and finally found the right home in the location they wanted. After closing on the new property, we listed their home and sold it quickly.

Bridge loans help homebuyers win contracts by eliminating the need to offer contingent contracts. One option is for the lender to offer a second lien position, helping you to save you closing costs. Usually an appraisal is required although not in every situation. Typically, a good lender can approve your bridge loan in 24 to 48 hours and close in as little as 10 days. Bridge loans give you time to fix up your existing home to help you sell for top dollar. Another option is the lender provides a bridge loan to acquire the new home which would be paid off in full when the existing house is sold. Bridge loans are also an excellent choice for homeowners downsizing who have substantial equity in their homes. We have helped many clients scale down from their large single family home to a condo, acquiring the new property first and then selling the existing one. Contact me for details!



Casey O'Neal
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